Table of Contents

1. Cats Of The Clans
2. Chapter One
3. Chapter Two
4. Chapter Three
5. Chapter 4
6. Chapter Four
7. Chapter Five
8. Chapter Six
9. Chapter Seven

Cats Of The Clans

Dawnclan:

Leader:

Dovestar, older white she-cat

Deputy:

Lillyfoot, white, gray, and beige she-cat

Medicine Cat:

Petalmoss, beige and brown tabby she-cat

Warriors:

Claywhisker: senior gray tom

Shadefoot: dark gray tom

Cloudheart: young white and grey speckled she-cat

Minnowslip: gray and black tabby tom

Drizzlemist: white she-cat with gray paws

Smokefoot: dusky black tom

Mossflower: calico she-cat

Hawkflight: brown and black tom

Reedfoot: light beige tom

Elders:

Blazefur: young fiery red tom

Greenclaw: rusty and brown tabby she-cat

Frostflower: delicate white she-cat

Apprentices:

Willowpaw: odd eyed calico she- cat

Thornpaw: black tom

Lynxpaw: brown and black tabby tom

Featherpaw: gray and black tabby she-cat

Rainpaw: black and white spotted she-cat

Sunpaw : light red she-cat

Dayclan

Leader:

Ripplestar: gray and white striped she-cat

Deputy:

Mudpelt

Medicine Cat:

Riverstone

Warriors:

Dustwhisker: a dusky senior tom

Grasstail: a beige young she-cat

Ravenwing: a jet black small tom

Windyfur: a light colored she-cat

Berrynose: a brown and black tabby she-cat

Barkfoot: a large muddy brown tom

Crookedfoot: a brown tom with a skewed left front paw

Sparrowfeather: a small black and beige tabby she-cat

Thunderstrike: a large black and brown spotted tom

Lionpelt: a yellow colored she-cat

Elders:

Dustfang: a dusky tom with white paws

Dapplenose: a dappled red and white she-cat

Apprentices:

Whitepaw: A white she-cat

Stonepaw: a gravel-gray tom

Duskclan:

Leader:

Maplestar: a brown, red and black calico tom

Deputy:

Amberclaw: a large shaggy brown and red she-cat

Medicine Cat:

Redsun: a rusty colored old tabby tom

Warriors:

Autumndapple: an orange she-cat

Stormclaw: a fierce gray tom with shaggy fur

Frostfang: a sharp white tom with short fur; uncommon among his clan

Mistpelt: a blue-gray she-cat

Goldencloud: a yellow colored she-cat

Leopardfang: a yellow and black striped tom

Fleetfeather: gray and beige she-cat

Pebblefoot: a small gray tom

Swiftshadow: small black and gray tom

Elders:

None

Apprentices:

Greenpaw: beige and brown she-cat

Smokeypaw: gray tom

Olivepaw: brown she-cat with black paws

Nightclan:

Leader:

Brackenstar: a brown and black tabby tom

Deputy:

Deadheart: a black tom who is ruthless due to his mate's death. Will kill any who oppose him.

Medicine Cat:

Stubtail: a gray tom with a short tail as a result from a run-in with a badger

Warriors:

Foxheart: a red tom with lithe limbs

Nightfang: a large black she-cat with piercing yellow eyes

Swiftwind: a black and white tabby tom

Eagleclaw: a white, black, and orange tabby with shaggy fur

Deadheart: a black tom who is ruthless due to his mate's death. Will kill any who oppose him.

Fallenpoppy: a red she-cat with withered legs

Sorrelheart: a red and orange she-cat

Birchstorm: a white and black striped tabby tom

Nettleflower: a gray she-cat

Graysong: a small smoke-colored she-cat

Dewclaw: a blue-gray tom

Swiftleap: a black and gray tom

Elders:

This clan has no elders. Brackenstar believes them to be useless and banishes them to live as rogues.

Apprentices:

Talonpaw: Brown and black tom

Petalpaw: beige she-cat

Shadowpaw: black and gray tom

Crowpaw: black tom

Meadowpaw: a beige and orange she-cat

Chapter One

Willowkitran a circle around her mother, Ferndapple. The small, odd-eyed calico suddenly dipped, rolled and filled her pelt with the mud of the new rain. Ferndapple laughed.

"Are you alright?"

Willowkit nodded. Sunkit padded gently out of the den. She eyed the puddles, dodging the large one to her left. her haunches tight, she leaned down behind her oblivious sister.

One pounch and the sisters were sent tumbling into a muddy patch of water. Ferndapple hissed as a splash struck her black and white tabby fur. She shook herself off and grabbed Willowkit by the scruff of the neck. She dropped her on the dirt and fished out her sister.

"You foolish kits! It's not Greenleaf yet! You still can freeze!"

"Relax. It's warm out today!" Sunkit said, trying to hide her shivering. Ferndapple didn't take that as an excuse.

"Back in the den wih you." She shoved them towards the nursury, two folded over honeysuckle bushes with brambles draped over them. Willowkit shook off the water again and entered the sun dappled bush, sort of like her mother's fur. Sunkit was almost identicle to her mother, but her tabby fur was reddish, like her father's. Willowkit had gotten a mix.

Linxkit bounded out of the corner, along with his shy sister, Rainkit. They slid to a stop beside their mother.

"Ferndapple! Guess what! Shadefoot brought by a mouse for you, but you weren't here! We kept it safe for you." Linxkit, the exitable tom, said.

She observed the quiet creature. Willowkit had been observing the clan lately. That was her new game. Figure them out. She always had been a bit observant, but now she was putting it to use. She found Ferndapple's short, cut-off mews towards Shadefoot made her think that maybe she didn't like the gray tom. He wasn't the friendliest to her, either. Ferndapple and him had gotten into a fair amount of arguments.

Ferndapple, still suspicious, took a bite into the rodent and slowly swallowed it. After her meal, she lay down with her exiteed kits.

"Soon enough, you'll be old enough to be apprentices. And such lovely apprentices you'll make!" She said. Rainkit suggled up close to her and faced the outdoors.

"Tell me again why you named us all what you did?" She mewed quietly, a near copy of her lovely mother. Ferndapple raked in the rest of her kindle with her paws and curled up with them. Being the only kits in the nursury at this time, she could whisper without interruptions from other mothers and kits.

"It was a stormy evening in the den, and lightning flickered around the nursury. My newly born kits, you four, snuggled against me with you father to gaurd us. Suddenly, with a loud crash, the great oak tree behind the den smashed onto the ground, narrowly missing us." A chorus of startled mews filled the nursury, like always.

"So, in honour of this storm missing us," She gestured to the small black and white kit, "I named you Rainkit." Rainkit stuck her head high.

"Then, afterward, the sun came out and shone like theere was never any rain at all. The light filtered through the willow branches over us. It was beautiful."

The kits snuggled in closer to their mother as she finished the story.

"And after that, Blazefur and I decided to name the last kit

Lynxkit, because of the powerful animal the last kit resembled." Lynxkit growled. He always did, because he was not named after one of the key components of the story. It made him envious.

"Alright kits, it's etting late. Let's get to sleep." No one argued. They snuggled closer to their mother. Willowkit squirmed into place amongst her siblings and closed her eyes. She fell swiftly into a dream.

She stood alone in a moonlit forest, but as a cloud covered the moon, visibility dwindled. The wood was soon swathed in darkness. She pawed forward nervously and glanced around. A strange smell hit her like a wave.

What was it? It was like no clan cat she'd ever scented. It smelled close. It was definatly a cat, and it was a little familiar...

She jolted awake as behind her, a great object jumped onto her in the dark forest. As she turned around, she found it was just her sister, Sunkit.

The bright kit bounced off her sister. "Wake up already!" Willowkit groaned and stood up. Shadefoot stood outside the door.

"Why is *he* here?" Willowkit asked in a low whisper. The smoky tom sat with his back to them. Sunkit shrugged.

"Waiting for Ferndapple, I suppose. She wasn't here this morning.

Willowkit glanced over to her still sleeping siblings and padded over. "Hey, wake up! Do you know where mom went?" The sleepy kits shook their heads. They followed her as she tipped her head toward the doorway of the hollowed tree stump. They were just about to ask Shadefoot if he could let them out when a yowl sounded from outside.

"They've been yowling forever. They were doing it a lot before you woke up. " Sunkit said.

Shadefoot suddenly pushed them back.

"I have sorry news for you." He said somberly. The kits looked out the front just in time to see the crowd of cats part to show a white and black pelt, unmoving on the ground. Petalmoss, the medicine cat, dipped her head over the dead cat.

"Ferndapple!"

Chapter Two

Willowkit trembled and collapsed. Her mother was dead. Sunkit wailed loudly beside her and Rainkit and Lynxkit ran out of the nursery from under Shadefoot's paws. And ran yowling after them, but the Sunkit took off too. Willowkit, however, couldn't move. She was stuck to the spot, wailing at the loss of her mother.

A senior warrior helped the grieving kitten to her feet. She recognized her as Windflower, a queen who had left the nursery half a moon ago. She nudged her forward.

"Willowkit, join your siblings. We have something to tell you. You need to know how your mother was killed." She shook her head.

"No! Ferndapple's not dead! Never! She'll come back! She's just sleeping! She's....she's...." She burst into tears once more. Windflower picked her up by the scruff of her neck and carried her over. Dovestar, the old female leader, stood beside Petalmoss and addressed the clan.

"Ferndapple and her sister, Cherrytail, were killed last night by an unknown warrior. Cherrytail was calling for help, and Ferndapple was the first to answer early this morning. The patrol of Nightclan warriors, including Thunderfoot, their deputy, were chased out, but not without a few deaths. The season's drought has been hard on them, and they wanted part of our territory."

The cats dipped their heads in sorrow. Willowkit choked back a sob.

"Since her kits were half a moon away from being apprenticies, I have made the decision to give them their names early. After we hold vigil for our fallen warriors, we will grant them names and mentors." Several cats gasped. This had never happened before! Would Starclan accept it? Willowkit was worried.

Would she be rejected by their ancestors? Her own mother?

~~*~~

"Cats old enough to catch their own prey, gather beneath the Overhang for an announcement. Willowkit, Rainkit, Sunkit, and Lynxkit, come join me." The kits stumbled across the sandy bottom of the dried creek bed. They jumped up onto the slate outcropping with Dovestar.

"Sunkit, you will be known as Sunpaw until you earn your warrior name. Your mentor will be Claywhisker." Sunpaw touched her muzzle to Dovetail's and sat on the other side. Her yellow pelt glowed in the sun filtering through the leaves and vines.

"Lynxkit, you are now known as Lynxpaw. Your mentor will be Cloudheart." They touched muzzles and he went to join Sunpaw.

"Willowkit, you are now and henceforth known as Willowpaw. Your mentor will be Shadefoot." Willowpaw gasped. Shadefoot? She hesitantly touched her muzzle to Dovestar's and hopped over to her sisters.

"Rainkit, you will now be..."

"Um, Dovestar, I would like to train as a medicine cat."

"Do you accept this, Petalmoss?" Petalmoss nodded.

The new apprentices jumped off the outcrop and went to their mentors. Willowpaw stared unsurely at her strange teacher. What would her mother think?

Chapter Three

Willowpaw stepped into the apprentices den. It was a clay covered cave in the side of the sinkhole they lived in. It was at one point, many, many moons ago, The Pit was a hole where water flowed contenuosly and stripped away the clay sides. Now, only a deep gully filled with water flowed through the middle. It was a good four tail lengths deep, and kits drowned in it on rare occasions. It was fed by a waterfall of the steep side of The Pit.

As soon as she stepped in, she noticed the three other apprentices, Featherpaw and Thornpaw. They glared at her uncertainly, as if they were mad at them for their mother dying.

"Kits don't belong in the apprentice den, you know." Thornpaw said with a sneer. Willowpaw couldn't believe this was the same cat who'd played with her for moons. Featherpaw shook her head and flipped over. Snoring was heard from the left corner, where Moonpaw dozed. Willowpaw arranged herself on the alien feeling moss and adjusted herself to sleeping alone. The crickets seemed to pound in her ears and echo the silence.

~***~

Sunpaw jumped onto Willowpaw, like always, to signal the start of the day. She blinked open her eyes and adjusted to the surroundings.

"It's time to train! Get up!" She licked her lips and sluggishly followed her sister out of the den. Shadefoot stood by the Waterfall, stoic and motionless as always. Was he really the best mentor for her? Sunpaw ran off towards her mentor and left her alone with the tom. He nodded for her to follow him and suddenly took off toward the entrance to the camp on the other side. Willowpaw stumbled once and struggled to keep up.

Shadefoot launched himself effortlessly over the creek running

through Dawnclan camp. Willowpaw slowed down, but then banished the hesitation. *I'll jump over it just like he did. I'll prove I'm worthy, even though I'm young."* She gathered her strength and jumped at the edge. Time seemed to slow. *Starclan save me,* she thought loudly. Her front paws hit the slick clay, while her back paws were bitten by the melted leafbare snows that filled the trench. She dug her claws into the bank and moved one up after the other. She held her breath until she sat looking over the water, safe.

"Why didn't you just jump over the thin part over there?" Shadefoot asked, suddenly over her shoulder. She glanced over to see Thornpaw smirk.

"I'll tell you in a bit." She said quietly. Shadefoot nodded. *Or maybe I won't.* Shadefoot walked much slower with her to the edge of the camp and into the newly green forest. They walked through places that Willowpaw had never been to as a kit. She smelled something sour.

"What is that?" She asked the stone colored cat.

"Nightclan. That's their border." She glanced over to see the forest started to end and drift off into a rocky plain. It was dotted with gaps and gorges and huge tufts of grass. Willowpaw couldn't understand what kind of clan would want to live there. It looked so barren of prey!

Willowpaw suddenly paused and sniffed. The stinking Nightclan scent was getting more powerful.

"A Nightclan patrol is coming." Shadefoot said as he paused with her. "Don't cross the border when they're around. They are feircly protective of their borders. You'll be dead in minutes."

Don't cross the border *when they're around,* she thought. Was Shadefoot hinting something?

"Their leader is Brackenstar. He's fierce and hostile, and he doesn't care about sacrificing his warrior's lives. " Willowpaw ticked her ear.

"Doesn't he know Starclan won't accept him?" She said.

"I don't think he cares." Shadefoot said with a flicker of knowing in his green eyes. Willowpaw wondered. Did Nightclan attack before?

Chapter 4

Willowpaw's nose twitched with anticipation. The strong scent of chipmunk floated through the leaves. THEN EVERYONE YOU LOVE DIED.

Chapter Four

Willowpaw's nose twitched with anticipation. The strong scent of chipmunk floated through the leaves. She smelled the faint scent of Shadefoot nearby. He hunted a bit away, out of sight at the bend of the creek. She twitched back to attention at the sound of the chipmunk moving. She whipped into action and pounced.

She killed the small animal quickly and buried it. She quickly went to find her mentor.

Shadefoot sat motionless by the river bank, a pigeon beside him. His glazed eyes stared at the rippled water.

"Are we going back to camp soon?" She asked. Instead of jumping at her words, the tom sat still.

"Yes. Go get any prey you caught and head back. I'll be right behind you." He said. Willowpaw twitched her ear, curious, and stalked off. She surfaced the chipmunk and started towards camp. Shadefoot didn't move, and Willowpaw had soon lost sight of him.

Her first time this deep in the forest, Willowpaw tried her hardest to detect and follow the scent trail they had left before and beat the rising moon. The pretty sunlight woods began to take on a darker aura, and sounds she had only heard faintly as a kit roused the instinctive fear all cats felt. She longed for the soft pelt of Ferndapple.

If it weren't for Nightclan, she'd still have her mother. She'd still be a kit. She wouldn't have to stalk catiously in the dark woods, following a scent that was hardly there.

Soon the familiar scents of her brethren met her. She found herself at the camp entrance, trying to hide her previous fear. Thornpaw glanced over. Flashing him a steely look, Willowpaw acted as if the forest were nothing at all. She dropped the chipmunk in the fresh-

kill pile and pranced to the apprentice den.

Passing th nursery, she caught the faint scent of Ferndapple. Two days felt like an eternity. She imagined her mother's bones, cold in the ground, lonely...

Suddenly spooked and sad beyond anycat's comprehension, she padded off swiftly to find her sister.

Sunpaw lay on her side, Petalmoss cleaning a graze on her side.

"Nobody told me rabbits are little balls of fury! I could have gotten it too, if it didn't have claws." She growled. Willowpaw giggled. Rainpaw walked in from the back, carrying a bundle of assorted plants and seeds. Petalmoss laughed.

"Not that many, just one or two poppy seeds and some spider web." Rainpaw bounced off with the leaves in her mouth. She came back with some wispy strings and black dots.

"Willowpaw, why don't you go to bed. It's a bit late." Petalmoss mewed. Willowpaw nodded and walked out, a little irked Petalmoss was talking to her like a kit. She dipped into the overhang that was the apprentice's den. Lynxkit, in all his tabby glory, lay srawled and asleep on his bed of moss.

"Hey, odd eyes." Featherpaw called her over. She had a blue and a green eye, but no one had ever referred to that. "Listn, you shouldn't be here. It's not a question that you've got no one to care for you, it's just you're two young and will hurt yourself. You should try to talk to Dovestar." Willowpaw recoiled.

"I'm as much of a warrior cat as you are! I'll prove it! Tomorrow, I'll go into Nightclan territory all on my own. Top that!" Featherpaw's eyes went wide, then she closed thm and shook her dusky-gray head.

"You'll only get yourself, hurt, or worse, killed."

Chapter Five

Willowpaw arranged her plan to prove Featherpaw wrong that night. Her crazed ideas raced through her head at a million miles per hour as she tried to sleep. She would wake up early and head off alone to where Shadefoot and her were last night. Nightclan wouldn't have patrols out that early. Would they?

She was suddenly roused by the gentle pawstep of some cat out in the middle of camp. She glanced over to see a gray pelt shrouded in shadow pad into camp. *Shadefoot!* Where had he been? His head was dipped low and his paws were squelching from standing in the creek so long. He sulked off to the warriors den. *Was he doing something sneaky or mourning? Was my mother right not to trust him?*

~***~

In her excitement, Willowpaw woke up before everybody. The dew of the morning covered her anxious paws as she walked towards the camp exit. The clouds seemed to promise rain, much unlike the day before. She checked around to make sure all was quiet, and set off. A few taillengths into the woods, she began to reconsider. It was all swept away by one thought. *I'll show them. I'm no kit.*

But then came the tearing fear that lead you whimpering back and forth. Back to camp. To Nightclan. Back to camp. She shook it off haphazardly and continued toward her goal. Paws as light as a featherfall, the young cat sat at the edge of her territory.

The sour stench of Nightclan sunk into her fur as she shifted through the tall grass that sanctioned off the woods from the plains. Rocks littered the sodden ground and tall grasses evened out. She headed towards a larger pile of boulders. *That must be Nightclan camp,* she thought, anxiety fluttering in her stomach. What would Dovestar think?

She stepped onto the boulders and sidestepped lichen. She stared into the narrow clearing, which smelled horribly strong. Cats

crowded into alcoves and grottoes. Suddenly, someone knocked her to the side.

It was a sleek beige and brown tabby. He pushed her off the boulder with a slight hiss. Not wanting to wake the rest of the clan, Willowpaw backed up quietly. The tom slinked forward.

"Get off this territory, hole-dweller. I will wake the rest of the clan."

"I...I'll be gone right away." She said, flustered. He roughly shoved her forward, but he was around the same size, so she pushed him away. "I'm going! You don't have to be rough with me!"

"Foxdung."

"My name's Willowpaw!"

"Willowpaw! Seems you're only as strong as a willow branch! Perfect name for one who bends in the precense of someone stronger." That was it. On the borders, Willowpaw snapped. She dove at her assailant, knocking him off gaurd. She pinned him to the ground and unsheathed her claws.

"So what are you called then, *oh strong one."* She said with sarcastic flourish. He breathed hard trying to catch his breath.

"Talonpaw."

"A brave name for such a weak cat." He hissed. She let him up and stepped into her border.

"I assume we stop fighting now, it would be fruitless anyway. We seem to be equals." He said, pride gone. Willowpaw's eyes widened at this cat's politness. From a Nightclan apprentice? Unheard of.

"I assume also." She dipped her head and walked toward her clan. She had just went through Nightclan. Who could call her a kit now? Suddenly, a thump to her left mad her jump. Featherpaw.

"You actually did it." She said, both dumbfounded and disappointed.

"Yeah, and did you see the cat I fought?" She said, gloating.

Featherpaw nodded.

"I've got new faith in you, but keep low, or you'll end up with a life as an apprentice forever." Willowpaw silently imagined it. She shook her head. She would be a warrior. But the image of Talonpaw stayed in her head. Why had he woken up?

~***~

"All cats old enough to catch their own prey, meet under the Ledge for a meeting." Dovestar's aging voice rang against the pit. Willowpaw jumped up from her meal of vole and walked over with the group.

"Dawnclan, Nightclan, Duskclan, and Dayclan will be meeting at the Moonfalls tonight for a meeting. I would like to have Two warriors and two apprentices come with me, along with Petalmoss and Rainpaw. I have chosen Lilyfoot, Claywhisker, Willowpaw, and Featherpaw." Willowpaw stood erect. A gathering? She was bound to get a glance of Talonpaw. Maybe talk o him.

One word then echoed in her mind. Why did she want to talk to him? They were enemies. Right?

Why?

Chapter Six

Willowpaw padded to Blazefur, her father. The fiery tom had been sedated by the death of his mate and retreated to the elder's den, forsaking his deputyship to Lilyfoot. She spent most days asleep now. Willowpaw nudged his fur.

"Blazefur! My first gathering!" Blazefur raised his head.

"How was it?" He said in a painful tone. The sight of him most bring so much pain to him.

"I haven't gone yet! Didn't you hear Dovestar?" She said, curious.

"No. I was asleep." He said mournfully. She began to resent her father just a little bit. Blazefur had missed so much. "Why is a kit like you going to a gathering?"

"Blazefur! I'm not a kit anymore! I'm an apprentice!"

"Oh, yes. I'd forgotten." She nodded.

"Bye." Willowpaw paw said curtly. She couldn't believe her own father forgot she was an apprentice. Although, he had been through a lot of trauma. But hadn't she been put through the same?

She came at the long call of Lilyfoot, the beautiful light colored deputy. She trailed behind her.

"How come Dovestar doesn't send more cats to the gathering?" She said. Lilyfoot blinked.

"The Gathering upholds a peace treaty. She feels she needs no protection." Willow paw glanced sideways at her in a very inquisitive manner. "Dovestar has been leader for a long time. She knows what she's doing."

The chosen gathering cats, including herself, Featherpaw,

Claywhisker, and Lilyfoot. Petalmoss and Rainpaw came too, but they would converse with the medicine cats. She wondered if Rainpaw had had a vision from Starclan yet. Clay whisker approached Dovestar.

"Dovestar, may Sunpaw come along? She's my apprentice and I'd like her to learn." Dovestar nodded. Sunpaw bounced into view and ran into Willowpaw. As the pair traipsed into the woods, they didn't notice Lynxpaw's eyes burning into their backs.

~***~

The entrance to the Moonfalls was a stone arch leading through a dark and dank passageway. Thoughts raced through Willowpaw's head almost as swiftly as winds flew through the tunnel. The gales then blew them into a large bowl shaped clearing with a spectacular waterfall on one end. Three similar tunnels ran in various directions. Dovestar padded over a neck of rocks and stood on a large stone jutting out of the crashing water. Her white fur seemed to gleam in the moonlight. Sharp, intelligent yellow eyes surveyed the ground beneath her, which was slowly filling with cats.

A red, black, and brown tom walked proudly into the opening from the tunnel opposite of Dawnclan's. Lillyfoot leaned over.

"That's Maplestar, leader of Duskclan." The proud cat followed Dovestar's pawsteps and stopped beside her. They quietly conversed. The clearing got a little quieter when a black and brown tabby walked in. the large tom parted the crowd and sat beside the two leaders.

"That's Brackenstar. He's ruthless. Nightclan doesn't even have elders because, when you get old, he deems you 'unsalvageable' and leaves you to a rogue life." Willowpaw shuddered. Didn't this cat expect to go to Starclan?

Last to arrive was a sleek, beautiful, gray and white tabby she-cat.

"Ripplestar. She is the youngest of the four." The four leaders stood around each other as the bare snowy moon showed it's face at the

top of the sky. The waterfall caught the light and bounced it around the glen, dazzling the feline crowd.

Willowpaw gaped in awe at the glimmering lights. Then movement in the corner of her eye caught her attention. It was who she had been looking for. *Talonpaw!* She bounced over to the black and brown tom. He turned around to meet her. She stopped in front of him and searched her blank mind for things to say. Nothing met her tongue.

"Hello, my equal." Talonpaw said quietly. Willowpaw blushed.

"Hello, equal." she repeated. He purred almost inaudibly. They stood awkwardly in front of one another until a shape barreled into Willowpaw.

"So, this is the cat you met on Nightclan territory?" Featherpaw said, unable to hide her curiosity with the cool words she used.

"Yes," Willowpaw said, "This is Talonpaw." Talon paw nodded briskly. A sharp call of his name turned his head.

"I have to go. My mentor needs me." Willowpaw nodded and swept off. She looked down into the water. The dancing light flew underneath like the unleashed souls of hundreds of birds. Crystals refracted the light even twice that. It was glorious.

"If only Ferndapple could see me now," Willowpaw said. "She's be so proud." Featherpaw sat and looked at the stars.

"I could never be a medicine cat, living at the edge of my seat, waiting for the next omen, always on my feet healing cats. How does your sister do it?" She said. Willowpaw glanced over at Rainpaw, who was standing quietly outside the medicine cat group.

"Why don't you go ask her yourself?" Featherpaw dashed over to her and started talking rapidly. Willowpaw lowered herself to the ground. All was well tonight.

Until an angry yowl echoed through the vale. All eyes went to the Waterstone, as it was called. Brackenstar's blood covered claw hung in the air. The beautiful white fur of Dovestar was stained red. She

lay on the stone, as if she was asleep. Lillyfoot yowled and bolted at the tom. Willowpaw turned to Petalmoss, whose frantic eyes surveyed the landscape. The dying leader, the fading lights, and the bare face of the moon veiled by a thunderhead.

"Her last life was lost to something she had no worries over. Her last life was a broken promise."

Chapter Seven

The blurred forms of cats jumped and yowled around her. Lilyfoot seemed to move in slow motion, barreling into the blood-splattered Nightclan leader. The two cats fell, yowling, into the now rain-rippled crystal pool, Splashing hard into the water. Ripplestar jumped in after them, whereas Maplestar stood back and rallied his clan.

The silver-gray leader pushed apart the two quarreling cats and pushed over Brackenstar. Lillyfoot was restrained from Brackenstar by Claywhisker and a Duskclan cat. Willowpaw ran up closer, only to be dragged back by Petalmoss. She shook out of the senior cat's grip and went to the start of the crowd.

She saw a familiar brown and black tabby pelt. A mood of distrust snuck into her mind. *Talonpaw's from Nightclan,* she thought. *And he looks an awful lot like Brackenstar...*

Lillyfoot threw one more open jawed bite at Brackenstar. She ripped her claws across his flank before her teeth hit his neck. Ripplestar pried the two cats appart as the rain started to pour. Thunder signaled the beginning of a storm. The fury of the clouds ravaged the ground as they wept for Dovestar. Starclan's rage was apparent. The scared yowls of cats echoed around her. Ripplestar and Maplestar drove Nightclan out of the clearing. Brackenstar glared back at Lillyfoot and hissed. Talon paw caught Willowpaw's eye. She drew up her lip and snarled. Why should she, his wretched clan killed her leader.

Dawnclan crowded around their motionless leader. Lillyfoot, Petalmoss, and Claywhisker lay the leader on their backs. They started the slow gate home. Willow paw stood next to Sunpaw. For once, the excitable apprentice was silent. Willow paw slowly looked up to Lillyfoot. She would be leader now. She would also need a deputy. Who would it be?

The group dispersed into the camp as the gasps of cats whipped up

the wind. A yowl sounded here and there. The body of Dovestar was set down by the stream. Cats sat silently around her to hold vigil. Lillyfoot jumped to the Highledge. She sat down and bowed her head. She reinstated her position and began to talk.

"Tomorrow I accompany Petalmoss to the Starcave behind the Moonfalls. I will then choose my deputy, if Starclan accepts me." Willowpaw tipped her head. Lillyfoot was humble. She liked that . It gave her the premotion that the she-cat would make a good leader.

That morning, the group set out at sunrise. Willowpaw awoke to the soft padding of cats out of the camp. She lay her head back down and returned to sleep.

She returned to the dark forest once again. The slightly familiar, but warped scent of somecat ran through the trees like veins of blood. She heard a growl. The calico whipped around to face two yellow eyes glinting in the darkness. The eyes pounced and the growl echoed in her ears.

Willowpaw awoke to the sound of cats awaking from their slumber. She stood up, wondering the strange recurring dream. Should she tell Petalmoss? Although, she was temporarilyy gone. Maybe she could ask Rainpaw!

She slowly rose out of her mossy bedding and padded to the entrance of the apprentices' den. If all was normal, Rainpaw should be in the medicine cat's den.

The cloudy demeanor of the sky immediately darkened Willowpaw's mood. The belligerent wind of the day whipped leaves of the ground carelessly. She led herself to a thin edge of the creek and jumped across it. Cats were starting to wake up, milling around the clay clearing. The sobering motion of Dovestar's death kept the mood in check.

She poked her head into the Medicine cat's den, letting herself in. Rainpaw sleepily sorted herbs into their respective piles on a low clay outcropping.

"Um, excuse me, Ivan I have a word?"

"Willowpaw! You can talk anytime! What's the problem?"

"I've been having a reacting dream about being in a dark forest. In the dream, I'm a grown cat, and I can feel something watching me. An evil thing behind me, ready to pounce. Then as it lunges at me, I wake up."

Rainpaw sat down and tilted her ears. She then looked at Willowpaw, deep in thought.

"It could be some sort of preemption, or maybe just an embodiment of your struggles. Like a looming doom, waiting to fall. Everyone feels it. It's unnerving. I suggest you tell Petalmoss when she returns, though."

Rainpaw licked Willowpaw's war as a sisterly greeting and went back to her herbs, as if nothing had happened.

****

Sorry I took so long to update, at the moment, I'm in Montana. To those who don't know me, I don't live in Montana. Road trips can be awesome, but limiting. Thanks for reading!